

Message Text

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17
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 DHA-02 MCT-01 SY-05

IO-13 /091 W
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P R 300728Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6332
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD BY POUCH
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4597

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, KU
SUBJECT: GOK DECAPITATES KUWAITI LABOR MOVEMENT

REF KUWAIT 4561

1. SUMMARY. PRESS REPORTS THAT THREE MORE KUWAITI LABOR
LEADERS ARRESTED SEPT 28, FOR TOTAL OFEIGHT. THOSE
ARRESTED INCLUDE FIVE TOP LEADERS OF NATIONAL-LEVEL
KUWAITI WORKERS CONFEDERATION, WHO ARE LEFTIST POLITICAL
ACTIVISTS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT, AND ARRESTS EFFECTIVELY
DECAPITATE LEADERSHIP OF CONFEDERATION. ARRESTS APPEAR
TO BE IN LINE WITH OTHER RECENT MOVES TO LIMIT DISSENT AND
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BATTEN DOWN POLITICAL HATCHES IN KUWAIT, BUT KEY

QUESTIONS REMAIN--WHETHER DISSENSION WILL GROW AS RESULT OF THIS MOVE AND WHETHER PALESTINAIN RESIDENTS IN KUWAIT EVENTUALLY WILL BECOME INVOLVED. END SUMMARY.

2. KUWAIT PRESS REPORT (AL RAI AL AM, SEPT 29) INDICATES THAT THREE MORE LABOR LEADERS ARRESTED SEPT 28 IN CONNECTION WITH THE DISTRIBUTION OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT PAMPHLETS DESCRIBED REFTEL, FOR TOTAL OF EIGHT ARRESTS DURING PAST 10 DAYS. PRESS REPORT ALLEGES THAT ALL THREE "WERE IN POSSESSION OF PROHIBITED PUBLICATIONS WHICH THEY HAD DISTRIBUTED" AND THAT THEIR INTENTION WAS TO "STIR UP TERROR" AND DEMAND RESTORATION OF "LEGALITY" IN KUWAIT. PRESS TERMS THOSE INVOLVED IN PAMPHLET INCIDENT AS "GANG" WHOSE "CELLS" WERE BROKEN UP BY KUWAITI SECURITY FORCES, AND ASSERTS THAT LABOR LEADERS ARRESTED SPET 28 WERE GANG LEADERS WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THEIR POSITIONS TO ENGAGE IN "DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITY". PRESS NOTES THAT ARRESTEES WILL BE TRIED UNDER STATE SECURITY LAW, WHICH PROVIDS FOR SECRET TRIAL PROCEDURES, AS IN CASES OF EARLIER ARRESTS (REFTEL).

3. THE EIGHT LABOR LEADERS ARRESTED INCLUDED FIVE EXECUTIVES OF THE KUWAIT WORKERS COFEDERATION (KWC) WHICH ENCOMPASSES THE ENTIRE KUWAITI LABOR MOVEMENT. THE EIGHT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. ARRESTED ON OR ABOUT SEPTEMBER 19:

ALI ABD AL RAHMAN AL KANDARI: ASSISTANT SECRETARY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF KWC; MANAGING EDITOR KWC PUBLICATION AL 'AMAAL; MEMBER ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL OF MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION. JALAL MUHAMMAD AL SAHLI (PROBABLY IDENTICAL WITH "JALAL MUHAMMAD JALAL"): MEMBER, PETROLEUM AND PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRIES WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION FEDERATION (ADMIN COUNCIL); MEMBER, ADMIN COUNCIL, KUWAIT NATIONAL PETROLEUM COMPANY WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION. RAJA SULTAN AL 'UTAYBI: MEMBER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, KWC; (PROBABLY) CHAIRMAN, ADMIN COUNCIL MINISTRY OF FINANCE UNION.

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B. ARRESTED ON OR ABOUT SEPTEMBER 23:

AMR AL MIKRAD: PRESIDENT, KNPC WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION; MEMBER ADMIN COUNCIL PETROLEUM AND PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRIES WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNIONS FEDERATION. NASIR THALIB, MEMBER ADMIN COUNCIL KNPC WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION; FOREIGN RELATIONS OFFICER, EXEC. COUNCIL, KWC.

C. ARRESTED SEPTEMBER 28:

NASIR AL FARAJ, PRES. EXEC. COUNCIL KWC; EDITOR IN CHIEF, KWC PUBLICATION, AL 'AMAAL; MEMBER ADMIN. COUNCIL KNPC WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION.
HUSAYN AL YUHAH, VICE PRES EXEC COUNCIL, KWC; ASST. EDITOR IN CHIEF KWC MAGAZINE, AL-'AMAAL; CHAIRMAN, ADMIN. COUNCIL, MUNICIPALITY ORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION.
THABIT AL HARUN, INTERNAL REALATIONS OFFICER, EXEC COUNCIL, KWC; SECRETARY, ADMIN, COUNCIL, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES UNION.

4. COMMENT. THE ARRESTS OVER PAST TEN DAYS ACCOMPLISH DECAPITATION OF KUWAITI WORKERS CONFEDERATION (KWC) LEADERSHIP AND PURGE OF SEVERAL LEADERS OF SOME COMPONENT UNIONS. ARRESTS ARE IN LINE WITH VAGUE PUBLIC ALLUSIONS TO TROUBLESOME GROUPS BY DEF MIN/INT MIN AND OTHERS OVER PAST SEVERAL WEEKS; PAMPHLET EPISODE MAY HAVE PROVIDED CONVENIENT EXCUSE FOR GOK ACTION AGAINST LABOR LEADERSHIP, WHICH COULD BE CONSIDERED LEFTIST ON KUWAITI POLITICAL SPECTRUM. ARREST OF LABOR LEADERSHIP ALSO APPEARS TO BE IN LINE WITH GENERAL KUWAITI POLICY OF "BATTENING DOWN HATCHES"--A RETREAT FROM FREEWHEELING DEMOCRACY WHICH CHARACTERIZED KUWAITI POLITCS PRIOR TO AMIRI DECRESS OF AUGUST 29 (WHICH DISSOLVED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SUSPENDED PARTS OF CONSTITUTION, AND HAVE RESULTED IN SUSPENSION OF FIVE PUBLICATIONS) ARRESTS OF LABOR LEADERS WILL NO DOUBT ALLOW GOK TO INFLUENCE CHOICE OF THOSE WHO TAKE THE PLACES OF ARRESTED LABOR LEADERS AND IS THEREFORE OPPORTUNITY FOR GOK TO HAVE MORE CONGENIAL UNION BOSSES.

5. KEY POLITICAL QUESTIONS NOW ARE WHETHER THESE ARRESTS WILL STIR UP DEEPER AND MORE SERIOUS DISSENSION IN LABOR MOVEMENT AND WHETHER THEY WILL SPARK PUBLIC DISSENT OR
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ACTION IN OTHER CIRCLES (STUDENTS, TEACHERS, ETC.)
WE WOULD NOT EXPECT GOK TO GET AWAY SCOT FREE WITH LABOR PURGE. WHILE INITIAL PUBLIC REACTION TO AMIRI DECREES OF AUGUST WAS MINIMAL, AND PURGE SEEMS SMALL STEP COMING ON HEELS OF GOVERNMENT SHAKEUP, VIEWED FROM PERSPECTIVE OF THOSE ALREADY OPPOSED TO TIGHTENING SABAH RULE IN KUWAIT, DECAPITATION OF ALABOR MOVEMENT COULD BE SEEN AS ANOTHER OMINOUS PORTENT. NO DOUBT THESE OPPONENTS ARE EVEN MORE CONCERNED NOW FOR FUTURE FREEDOM OF ACTION. SOME WILL PROBABLY SEEK TO MAKE THEIR FEARS AND HOSTILITY KNOWN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER INSIDE KUWAIT, IN ADDITION TO PUBLICIZING THEIR GRIEVANCES ABROAD, AS SUGGESTED BY OTHER REPORTING. SUCH OTHER REPORTING OF A PRELIMINARY NATURE SUGGESTS, HOWEVER, THAT PALESTINIANS WILL NOT MIX IN THIS KUWAITI AFFAIR.

6. IT IS CLEAR THAT GOK ACTION AGAINST THESE LABOR LEADERS IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED MOVE AGAINST LEFTIST ACTIVISTS IN LABOR MOVEMENT, RATHER THAN ATTEMPT TO RESTRICT FURTHER WHAT IS A LARGELY WEAK, PASSIVE ECONOMIC ROLE OF LABOR IN KUWAIT. THIS GOK ACTION MAY NOT HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO AFFECT THE NORMAL FUNCTION AND ROLE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT, BUT THIS MAY WELL BE A BYPRODUCT OF THE LEADERSHIP PURGE. ALSO, WHILE THIS ACTION MAY NOT HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS INTERNALLY IN KUWAIT, POSSIBLE REACTION OUTSIDE COULD BE SEVERE. RADICAL ARAB STATES WILL FIND WELCOME EXCUSE FOR TARRING SABAH REGIME AS REACTIONARY. ELEMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL LABOR MOVEMENT COULD VERY WELL TAKE THE DECAPITATION OF KUWAIT UNION MOVEMENT AT ITS FACE VALUE, AND CONDEMN GOK QUOTE ANTI-LABOR UNQUOTE TREND. MAESTRONE

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